

CHRISTMAS

HOPE IS CONFIDENT TRUST THAT ALL IS IN GOD'S HANDS

The prospect of Christmas within weeks can fill us with mixed-up feelings. Rushing against time to get things done, no cards sent, not being able to find the right presents and the treat of terrorists attacks which haunt crowded streets and shops.

Yet as the days go by the candles on the evergreen Advent wreath burn brightly as a reminder that even in the darkness of our winter the light of life shines out. Carols and prayers life up minds and hearts in hope; for the birth of Jesus Christ marks a new start in human affairs.

This is the season to foster the great Christian virtue of hope. Normally to hope meant to look at an uncertain present to a secure future. Christian hope isn't to do with pension, savings and careful planning, but a confident trust that all is in God's hands.

Perhaps the childhood experience of that endless wait for Christmas Day to arrive is the perfect parable of such hope. Each day brings its own anxiety and fret; but each day is live in the sure knowledge that God's salvation is at hand and will be achieved. After all, the person whose birthday is Christmas came homeless into the world and was a childhood refugee; in his life he was banned from towns and villages, and he died an outcast in the company of thieves. Yet out of that uncertain present came the sure hope of forgiveness and life for all.

Just now the prospect of Christmas brings such mixed feelings. But that most wondrous tale of all is true. It can lighten our darkness and bring an irresistible hope.

Archbishop Vincent Nichols